

ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION
Director's Conference Room, 3839 N. 3rd St., Suite 209, Phoenix, AZ 85012
Thursday – January 14, 2010

M I N U T E S

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairwoman Fulkerson.

Present

Advisory Commissioners

Linda Fulkerson, Chairwoman
Gary Fredricks, Vice Chairman
George Cushing
Terrie Gent*
Larry McKim*
Lionel Sanchez
Kenneth Yamanouchi*

*Participated by telephone

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Joey Strickland, Director
Dave Hampton, Public Information Officer
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner

Absent

Jeffrey Olson

Guests:

R. Gregg Maxon (Retired Brig. General - Arizona Army National Guard)
Monica Cabrera, Public Information Officer, VA Regional Office

Chairwoman Fulkerson called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. The special meeting was called with an abbreviated agenda.

Military and Veterans Legal Clinic

As background, Gen. Maxon provided his contact with John Phelps, the recently named Executive Director of the Arizona State Bar, and his meeting with the Board of Governors about issues of importance to veterans. The support from that body was immediate and a standing committee was formed to identify ways the legal community could help. The Arizona State Bar Military Committee has 20 lawyers plus 5 members of the public, which includes ADVS Director Strickland.

The Veterans Assistance Court in Maricopa County is indefinitely stalled at this time, but there is no reason that another smaller superior court shouldn't establish one. Gen. Maxon spoke with Commissioner Gent about the possibility of working with Cochise County Superior Court as a possible pilot project for the state.

Since being named as Chair to the Bar's Military Committee, Gen. Maxon has been speaking with Steven Gonzales, Phoenix School of Law. Professor Gonzales is working to establish a clinic where veterans can obtain no or low cost legal services. The clinic will not provide VA claim support or assistance with criminal matters, since veterans are able to obtain that type of assistance elsewhere. The focus is to re-integrate military personnel and veterans more fully into their civilian lives so they can become fully productive citizens.

The Phoenix School of Law was looking for a specific theme for their clinical program that would provide its students with opportunities to provide legal support in various areas of law. The

proposed legal clinic for veterans could be easily accessed by veterans who were at the Phoenix VA Medical Center, the Phoenix Vets Center, and the VA Regional Office. The clinic provides an opportunity for the school to distinguish itself as a good community partner, providing meaningful work for its law students, and resolve nagging legal issues that keep veterans from fully re-integrating into their communities.

Gen. Maxon made a plea to the Unified Arizona Veterans meeting this month and requested the member organizations prepare letters to of support for the program. There are approximately 50 letters of support so far that have been mailed to Professor Gonzales, which will be useful as he presents the program concept to key decision makers at the Phoenix School of Law.

Commissioner Gent, who was formerly an administrative law judge in the Air Force had technical questions that Gen. Maxon answered. She is not a member of the Arizona State Bar, but offered her services as a liaison for Southern Arizona. At the conclusion of the presentation, she voiced her support of the proposed program and her appreciation for Gen. Maxon's efforts.

Larry McKim wanted to know how the Phoenix School of Law program would help military personnel and veterans outside Maricopa County. Gen. Maxon doesn't know that Phoenix School of Law would shy away from representing veterans outside Maricopa County, but it may not be practical if in-court representation is required. He has been in contact with a law professor at the University of Arizona Law School, however, so there may be other opportunities to support veterans in the southern part of the state.

Gen. Maxon is also looking to put together a list of attorneys who are willing to take on pro bono cases for veterans and is encouraging superior courts outside Maricopa County to consider developing a veterans court.

Vicechair Fredricks moved that the Commission send a letter of support to the Phoenix School of Law with copies to the ADVS Director and to Governor Brewer. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cushing and was supported unanimously. Chairwoman Fulkerson will draft a letter.

In a future meeting, the Commission would like to discuss the Military Committee of the Arizona State Bar.

Budget

Dave Hampton passed out a recent Arizona Republic article that illustrated how difficult the 2010 and future budget situations for all state agencies. The agency will be cutting approximately \$600,000 during FY 2010. In FY 2011, there are structural deficits that must be addressed. Revenues and expenditures are so out of line, there will be a \$3.4 billion deficit on top of the deficit this year.

Travel costs for the Commission travel have been:

Fiscal year 2007/2008	\$16,088.78
FY 2008/2009	\$15,784.01
FY 2009/2010	\$ 5,555.45 (with 5 more months in the fiscal year)

These costs do not include any staff time to provide administrative support to the Commission or time to attend the meetings. Commissioner McKim stopped submitting travel claims last

October and doesn't intend to file any claims through the end of his term. Other Commissioners have also avoided asking for travel reimbursement in light of the budget pressures. Travel has been paid through the Veterans Donation Fund.

Commissioner Cushing moved to rearrange the meetings so that they have telephonic meetings on the odd months and regular meetings on the even months and to remove June and July from the schedule. It was seconded and unanimously supported.

Communications:

Three letters were received:

- Leo Chischilly wrote on 12/10/09 that there would be no representative from the Navajo Veterans Affairs at the Advisory Commission due to hazardous driving conditions, but reiterated they need for a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic.
- A letter from Director Strickland dated 1/5/10 requested that the Commission consider reducing the number of meetings.
- A letter from US Senator Jon Kyl that outlined the Department of Defense's policy on upgrading a Silver Star to a Congressional Medal of Honor for deceased veteran Huskie Yazzie Begay Ten. Reconsideration by the US Department of Defense may occurs when there is "new, substantive and material information" within one year of the award.

The letters sent out by the Commission were:

- Letter to Dr. David Emelity, Director of the Mental Health Services at the Southern Arizona Veterans Affairs Health Care System; forwarding a letter from a 100% service connected veteran with a psychiatric disability.

Director Strickland sent out a letter this week soliciting nominations for 3 vacancies on the Advisory Commission as of July 1, 2010. It was sent out to all veterans service organizations and as many Native American email addresses on file.

Open Discussion/Good of the Order:

Commissioner Gent has been working closely with Valerie Williams, Veterans Benefits Counselor who has done an outstanding job supporting the regional meeting scheduled for this Saturday in Safford.

Director Strickland announced that he received a phone call from Assistant Secretary for the VA Intergovernmental Affairs Office, Tammy Duckworth. Secretary Shinseki has established an office of American Indian Veterans at the VA and there will be 4 - 5 Native Americans on staff to focus on issues of importance to the those veterans..

Vicechair Fredricks will draft a letter regarding the change in meeting times.

Adjournment – Chairwoman Fulkerson adjourned the meeting at 11:07 a.m. The next meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, January 16, 2010, in the Eastern Arizona College, Fine Arts Building Auditorium, located at 615 N Stadium Ave Thatcher, AZ 85552.